



Short Communication

A review on phycological studies with special emphasis on Kashmir Himalayan Valley: Algal Biodiversity

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Abstract: The present communication has documented the role of different researchers regarding the biological diversity of freshwater algal species representing various groups and distributed in diverse freshwater habitats around the globe and in India with special emphasis on Kashmir valley of Jammu and Kashmir, India.

Keywords: Algae, Biodiversity, Distribution, Freshwater, Kashmir valley.

Introduction

Algae are a diverse group of simple plants ranging from unicellular to multicellular form and are considered as the first autotrophic plants of the planet. They are very small, single-celled to complex multicellular forms, such as the giant kelps of the eastern Pacific Ocean that grow to more than 60 meters in the length and form dense marine forests. They comprise nearly one-third part of world plant biomass of the earth and are ubiquitous, that occur in almost all habitats, ranging from marine and freshwater to desert sands and from hot springs to snow. The habitats occupied by freshwater algae are divided into lotic and lentic water types. Algae are placed at the lowest rung of evolution and serve as a base model for the origin of land plants. They have enormous economic implications, not only as primary producers and pollution indicators (Prasad & Singh 1996) but also as a source of several natural products, biofertilizers and fine chemicals. They are an inseparable associate of the environment and also help in the purification of the environment. The early accumulation of oxygen in the earth's atmosphere was due to photosynthesis of ancient algal forms. It is estimated that the algal photosynthesis contributes nearly 90 percent of oxygen release in the earth's atmosphere. Globally algae are considered to fix 50 percent of CO₂ and are the primary producers in aquatic habitat supporting rich food chains and oxygenate the aquatic systems (Misra *et al.*, 2001). Scientists have estimated the total number of algal species to over 50,000 in the world but only 30,000 species are identified and examined (Frac *et al.*, 2010). Even fewer species are really tried out biotechnologically for industrial purposes. Algae are especially effective in converting carbon dioxide and other nutrients into organic compounds. An algal facility could be

sited next to a power plant or industry that burns fossil fuels and could recycle part of the carbon dioxide from flue gases into liquid fuels. Thereby shall help us to reduce its emissions in the atmosphere and combating climate change.

Comprehensive research work has been done on the biological diversity of freshwater algae around the globe and to get the latest algal floristic data, an attempt has been made in this review paper to carry out the documentation in order to consolidate the available work on freshwater algae carried by different researchers.

Algological studies - A glance of global scenario

The progress of algological studies around the globe has been reviewed for last more than five decades. The work has been extensively done on Chlorophyceae, Cyanophyceae, Bacillariophyceae and Rhodophyceae. The 19th Century witnessed a great spurt in algal studies: From 1817-1824 Agardh carried out a study on the algal flora of Scandinavia. Ralfs (1848) studied desmids of Britain. A great contribution came from Kuetzing (1845-1849) who authored a great number of genera than any phycologists before and described many species. Afterwards, from 1891 Borge carried out an extensive research on the algal flora of Germany as well as on the collections received from China and Paraguay. West & West (1895, 1897-1898) have given a detailed taxonomical enumeration of freshwater algae from Madagascar, North America and Singapore. A monograph of British Desmidiaceae was prepared by West *et al.*, in 1923. The freshwater algae of South Africa particularly from Natal and Transvaal cape colony were studied

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by Fritsch & Rich (1924, 1937). The freshwater algal flora of Ceylon was reported by Crow (1923). Handa (1927 a, b) has made an important contribution to the freshwater algae from Rangoon. Prescott (1931, 1935, 1936 a, b & 1937) reported desmid flora of Iowa, New England, Western United States, Gatun Lake, Panama Canal, Isle and Michigan. Prescott & Magnotta in 1935 gave notes on Michigan desmids.

A study of the algal flora of Britain was carried out by Lund (1942-1960) who recorded species like *Chlamydomonas*, *Scenedesmus* and few new forms. The structure and reproduction of algae were explored by Fritsch (1945). Some freshwater algae from North America were reported by Prescott *et al.*, (1949). Prescott & Scott (1945) and Prescott (1951) carried out extensive work on the freshwater algae of United States of America. The algae of Illinois were reported by Tiffany & Britton (1952). Indonesian freshwater algae received a considerable attention from Scott & Prescott (1956, 1958 and 1960) who prepared notes on them. Coessel (1975, 1979, 1984, 1988, 1989 & 1993) made significant contributions to Dutch desmid flora & Coessel (2000) also studied the desmid flora of Thailand. Pham *et al.*, (2011) prepared a checklist of the algae of Singapore. Freitas & Loverde-Oliveira (2013) prepared a checklist of green algae for the State of Mato Grosso, Central Brazil.

Phycological research in India

In the eighteenth and nineteenth century, great advances have been made in the field of Algology, especially on Cyanophyceae, Chlorophyceae, Bacillariophyceae and Rhodophyceae throughout the Indian subcontinents. During the last 60 years, several standard publications on morphology and taxonomy of various algal groups were credited to prominent algologists like Desikachary (1959) on Cyanophyta, Randhawa (1959) also added new dimensions to the study of Zygnemataceae. Ramanathan (1964) on Ulotrichales, Philipose (1967) on Chlorococcales while Iyengar and Desikachary (1981) on Volvocales, Gonzalves (1982) on Oedogoniales. Likewise Anand (1989) came up with publications on Blue green algae.

Ehrenberg (1854) was the first worker who studied the geographical distribution of various species of Diatoms particularly from Bengal in India. Turner (1892) published a memoir of the East Indian freshwater algae. Turner in his work incorporated 22 species of Myxophyceae, 542 species of desmids and 60 species of Chlorophyceae exclusive of desmids. West & West (1902) described 7 species of Rhodophyceae, 49 species of diatoms, 33 species of Myxophyceae, 246 species of desmids and 34 species of Chlorophyceae from Ceylon. West & West (1907) recorded 58 species of diatoms and 148 species of desmids as well as 53 species of blue-green algae from Madras and Burma. Ghose (1923,

1927b) has given systematic and ecological accounts of blue-green algae from Lahore, Shimla and Rangoon areas. Bharadwaja's (1928-64) notable contribution was on the Cyanophycean flora of Uttar Pradesh, India. The distribution of Ulotrichales algae in India was extensively studied by Ramanathan (1964) in his monographic work. Randhawa (1934, 1936b, c, 1938, 1940, 1941b, 1943, 1958, 1959) extensively studied and made significant contributions on Zygnemataceae and Chaetophoraceae. The occurrence of Oedogoniales taxa in India has been reported by Singh (1936), Gonzalves & Sonnad (1961) from Mysore, Goyal (1964b) from Rajasthan, Bharati & Pai (1972b) from Mysore, Karnataka. Misra (1937) reported Zygnematales members from Kashmir valley of Jammu and Kashmir. The Cladophorales were recorded from different places of India by Balakrishnan (1954), Randhawa & Venkataraman (1961). Goyal & Venkataraman (1964) have described culture variations in the morphology of *Anabaena cycadeae* Reink. Chaturvedi & Pandey (1976) have listed 52 taxa of Cyanophyceae and Chlorophyceae from Rohilkhand, Uttar Pradesh India. Pandey & Pandey (1980) have studied 33 taxa under 15 genera of Bacillariophyceae from Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh India. Mukhopadhyay & Chatterjee (1981) have compiled the description of 57 taxa of blue-green algae from Howrah district, West Bengal. Dickie (1882) described few interesting algae from Sikkim Himalayas. In 1984 Sankaran discovered a new species of genus *Batrachospermum* Roth named as *B. desikacharyi* from Tamil Nadu. Prasad *et al.*, (1986) enumerated 22 taxa of Cyanophyceae from Panchmarhi, Madhya Pradesh. Desikachary *et al.*, (1990, 1998) prepared a detailed account of Indian Rhodophycean algae from fresh as well as marine water habitats. A pioneer work on Chlorococcalean flora was done by Kaushik *et al.*, (1991) from Madhya Pradesh. Kant & Gupta (1998) have comprised 171 species of Cyanophyceae from Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir. In the same year, they made an extensive survey of algal forms of Ladakh and recorded 286 genera, 848 species, 155 varieties, 27 forms and 6 combinations. Habib (2000) studied 25 taxa of diatoms under 10 genera described from foot hills of Garhwal Himalaya Uttaranchal. Habib (2001) has studied some Chlorococcalean taxa from foothills of Kumaun Himalaya. Suseela & Dwivedi (2001) reported 4 taxa of Chaetophoralean members from Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh. Suseela & Dwivedi (2002) have made a great contribution to freshwater algal flora of class Bacillariophyceae from Bundelkhand region Uttar Pradesh. In the same year, Pattanaik & Adhikary (2002) have reported 16 taxa under 8 genera of Cyanophyceae from some archaeological sites and monuments of India. Khare & Suseela (2004) have enumerated 31 taxa of Cyanophyceae, Chlorophyceae and Bacillariophyceae from Nainital, Uttaranchal. Misra *et al.*, (2004) studied 17 taxa of 15 genera in

Cyanophyceae, Chlorophyceae and Bacillariophyceae from Sant Kabir Nagar, Uttar Pradesh. Suseela & Toppo (2007) enumerated the desmid flora of Sikkim Himalayas. Toppo & Suseela (2009) enumerated *Scenedesmus* species in Chhattisgarh State. Suseela & Toppo (2010) enumerated the occurrence of rare desmids and their addition to Indian algal flora. Suseela & Toppo (2011) studied the occurrence and diversity of *Staurastrum* species in lentic water bodies of Chhattisgarh State. Cyanobacterial diversity (31 species) along with the physico chemical characteristics of a lentic ecosystem from the Gangetic plain has been studied by Bajpai et al., (2013). Kumar et al., (2013) studied the Cyanophycean flora of Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh. Singh et al., (2014) explored the Chroococcales in river Ganga at Kanpur while Srivastava et al., (2014) explored the Cyanobacteria of Sai River, Lucknow. Recently Jitendra & Anand (2016) recorded eight new records of fresh water filamentous algae (*Oedogonium* Link) from India.

Algal investigations in Kashmir himalayan valley

The pioneering studies on the Lakes of Kashmir have been initiated with the work of Kant & Kachroo (1973) reported the peak for Myxophyceae in October, Chlorophyceae in August, and Bacillariophyceae in January and February, and Cryptomonadineae in September-October, and Dinophyceae and Euglinineae in August-September, Bacillariophyceae had a secondary peak in October and monthly distribution of dominant genera was also represented graphically. Mir & Kachroo (1982) reported that in the Dal and Nagin lakes of Kashmir Himalaya, the main bulk of the phytoplankton comprises Bacillariophyceae with the highest standing crop in spring-summer interphase and depression in winter. They found that local meteorological disturbances and the shallowness of the lake cause erratic fluctuations in physico chemical parameters and alter the biological balance of the lake water. Zutshi & Vass (1982) studied the phytoplankton crop of the lake and reported that in general lake consist of members belonging to Chlorophyceae, Bacillariophyceae and Cyanophyceae. They also found significant site variation with regard to plankton distribution. Wanganeo & Wanganeo (1991) revealed that lakes in Kashmir manifested a marked change in algal assemblage with a change in physical and chemical environment. Khan (2002) consolidated first series on phycological studies in Kashmir and recorded a total of 889 documented algal species representing various groups and distributed in diverse freshwater habitats. Iqbal et al., (2008) recorded a total of 134 species of phytoplankton and species like *Asterionella formosa*, *Pediastrum tetras* and *Tetraedron regulari* restricted their presence only near the regions receiving sewage outfalls and species like *Pediastrum ovatum*, *Merismopedia glauca* and *Trachelomonas* sp. were

found only at open water sites. Shafiq-ur-Rehman (2009) found that the Dal lake of the Kashmir valley has suffered from formation of a rare phenomenon of red-bloom of a new species discovered as *Euglena shafiqii*. The nutrients have been found important factor for the periodicity and aggregation of *Euglena shafiqii*, since during the bloom period the nutrients were reduced, thus believed to be utilized by the organisms for growth. Ganai et al., (2010) carried out studies on Wular lake and identified 64 phytoplankton spp. The most abundant species in terms of population density were *Amphora* spp., *Cyclotella* spp., *Navicula* spp. and *Nitzschia* spp. Chlorophyceae and Cyanophyceae showed a positive correlation with water temperature respectively at the selected site whereas Bacillariophyceae and Euglenophyceae showed the negative correlation with water temperature respectively. Lone et al., (2016) identified a total of 22 algal genera comprising of 39 species, 6 varieties during the four seasons at six different sites of Dal lake. They also found that Rhodophyceae algae *Glaucosphaera vacuolata* was monotypic in its representation and was reported during the autumn season at DLS-IV and is a new record reported to the phycological studies of India. Blue-green microalgae *Microcystis aeruginosa* was found abundantly at DLS-II indicating alarming toxic nature of water as this alga contains microcystins of neuro and hepatotoxins.

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